

Newsroom Partnership Survey Executive Summary

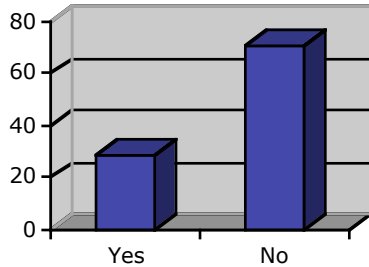


Table 1: Percentage of newspapers that have partnerships

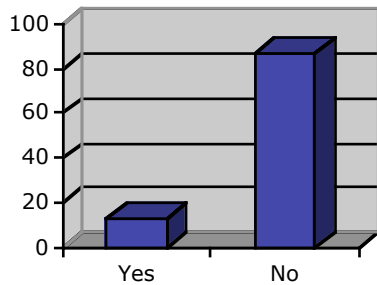


Table 2: Percentage of newspaper-television partnerships that have common ownership

Almost 30 percent of daily newspapers in the United States have partnerships with television stations, and those newspaper-television partnerships exist at all circulation levels. That finding by researchers at Ball State University comes from the first nationwide study of daily newspaper editors regarding their newspaper's convergence routines. The study also suggests the ways in which those partnerships operate can vary greatly.

Results of the study reflect both some surprises and some expected findings on the operations of newspaper-television partnerships.

On the one hand, editors report that their partnerships frequently perform many of the functions often considered to reflect convergence: sharing of daily news budgets, cross-promotion of partners' content and appearances by newspaper staff members on partners' broadcasts. On the other hand, some functions are performed by a relatively small number of partnerships.

The findings suggest that a few newspapers are relatively committed to their convergence efforts while others either are still trying to define their efforts or have adopted partnerships in name only.

The study also found:

- Separate corporations own newspaper and television station partners in an overwhelming percentage of cases.
- Newspapers are willing to share story budgets and lineups with their broadcast partners, but they are mindful of a need to maintain a competitive edge by holding back stories that might be considered exclusives.
- Although about a quarter of editors say their partner's logo appears in their news columns more than once a week, newspaper staffs spend little time during news meetings discussing how to promote their partner's stories.
- More than a quarter of newspapers that have partnerships designate a person to promote the newspaper's stories on the partner's broadcast at least once a week.
- About 12 percent of editors say they and their partner make use of a common editor or assignment desk to coordinate story planning on a daily or almost daily basis.
- About a quarter of partnerships plan special projects together at least four times a year. They frequently share the costs of those projects and coordinate release of the results.

The Power of Promotion

Much has been written about the benefits of cross promotion in newspaper-television partnerships and this study confirms that a small group of newspapers appears to be relatively committed to promoting their stories on their partner's broadcasts. Still most newspapers are not taking advantage of the cross-promotion opportunities, and they give little attention to promoting their partners' content.

Specifically, the study found:

- More than one in four – 26.9 percent – of newspapers designate one staff member to appear on their partner's newscast at least once a week to promote stories in the next day's newspaper. At the same time, however, almost two-thirds of respondents – 63 percent – said they do not designate a staff member for promotion.
- Instead of designating an on-air promotion person, newspapers are more likely to have a staff member who has expertise on a beat appear on their partner's broadcast to explain a story. Although almost half – 47.2 percent – of respondents report they never have a beat expert appear on their partner's broadcast, almost three in ten – 29.6 percent – say they do so at least once a month.
- An overwhelming majority of newspapers – 70.1 percent – do not spend time during their news meetings discussing how to promote their partner's content. Still, 13 percent devote time to such activities at least once a week, reinforcing the idea that a small group of newspapers appears committed to the promotional opportunities offered by convergence partnerships.
- A similar pattern emerges when newspaper editors are asked if they encourage readers to view enterprise stories that are run by their partner, but not by themselves. While less than 10 percent of newspapers – 8.4 percent – encourage readers to view those stories at least once a week, 65.7 percent never do.
- The most likely way newspapers promote their partners is by running their logos in the news columns. Almost one-fourth – 23.4 percent – of newspapers say their partner's logo appears in their news columns more than once a week. The same percentage report that their partner's logo never appears in their news columns. Answers to open-ended questions suggest one of the most likely places newspapers will run their partner's logo is on the weather page, where the newspaper can take advantage of the audience recognition often afforded local broadcast meteorologists.

What the editors said

"We share info on breaking news mostly so that neither of us misses a story. We hope in the future to have our TV partner broadcast from our newsroom and run video on our Web site. This increases our exposure in our market. For a small newspaper, this is invaluable."

"It's not a daily thing though at one time it appeared that it might become so. In the future maybe it will."

"This partnership works well because we respect each other's work and professionalism."

Sharing work and resources

The traditional competitive spirit remains intact at newspaper-television partnerships – at least from newspapers’ point of view. Most editors indicate they are willing to share at least some of their planning budgets with their partner, but they appear to be leery about sharing too much. At the same time, editors report they are sharing some planning of special projects and the costs of those projects with their partners.

Editors were asked which of a series of statements best described how they share information with their partners. Their responses:

- 16 percent never share.
- 44.3 percent are selective in what they share.
- 17 percent share most stories but request that they run some stories before their partner runs them.
- 12.3 percent share most stories but hold back stories on which they have a competitive advantage over their partner.
- 10.4 percent said they shared all stories with their partner.

Those results are supported by other findings in the study. Specifically:

- Newspapers are more likely to share partial lineups of stories they are planning to run than they are to share a complete lineup. While 27.1 percent say they share a complete lineup with their partner more than once a week, 42.4 percent say they share a partial lineup more than once a week. Similarly, while 22.6 percent say they never share a partial lineup of stories, 71 percent say they never share a complete lineup.
- More than once a week, about one in three newspapers – 29 percent – update their partner throughout the day on the progress of stories they are reporting. A similar number – 36.4 percent – say they never update their partners.
- Newsrooms are likely to share video or photographs if one of the partners misses or chooses not to cover a story. About 21 percent of newspapers say they do so at least weekly and almost three-quarters say they do so at least four times a year.
- Although half say they never share physical resources, such as allowing a newspaper photographer to ride in the station’s helicopter, 18.8 percent say they do so at least once a month.
- Although more than half of respondents – 51.4 percent – never share the cost of special projects or investigations with their partners, 3.8 percent do so once a month and 16.2 percent do so at least four times a year.

What the editors said

“Our partner’s market is much larger than our so we pick and choose those opportunities that make sense for both organizations.”

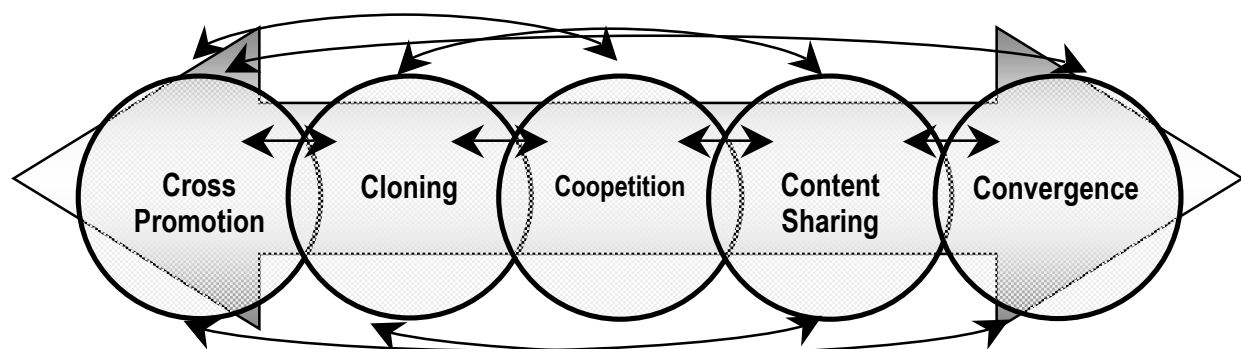
“We have yet to be convinced that a partnership with a TV station will deliver as much to us as it will to the TV station.”

“We partner selectively for certain periods specifically during certain sports seasons and for some political race and issues.”

Is it really convergence?

Journalists and researchers have disagreed on whether news operations that rely mostly on cross-promotion and budget-sharing activities are pushing the idea of convergence to its potential. Some people have suggested that true convergence happens when cross-media news organizations plan stories based on using the strengths of each media, for example, the context of newspapers, the immediacy of television and the interactivity of the Web.

The authors of this study will do further analysis of these initial results to try to test their theory that convergence is defined by some degree of cooperation and interaction between a newspaper staff and a television staff, and that the amount of cooperation and interaction can differ from partnership to partnership depending on the needs of the partners. The authors suggest convergence happens on a continuum, which assumes that the degree of cooperation and interaction increases as partnerships move from the left to the right on the continuum. The model also assumes that a partnership's position on the continuum can change depending on the projects the partners are pursuing.



Early results in this study suggest newspapers that have partnerships are operating at the cross-promotional or coopetition levels of convergence. But the answers to a few questions suggest some might be practicing convergence closer to the right side of the continuum:

- ▣ 12.2 percent say a common assignment desk or editor coordinates the story-planning process either every day or almost every day; 80 percent say they never use such a desk.
- ▣ 8.4 percent say a common manager or editor determines how to use the strengths of each medium to give the most meaningful story to the audience every day or almost every day; 81.3 percent say they never use such a strategy.

Data from this study require further analysis to determine the extent to which newspaper-television partnerships reflect the continuum. However this early analysis provides a snapshot of the state of convergence at daily newspapers in the United States and, perhaps, a hint at the efforts that will be required of those partnerships that want to increase their collaborative efforts.

Methodology. This study was conducted by a combination of e-mail and U.S. mail notifications sent to editors at 1,452 daily, English-language newspapers in the United States between June and September 2004. The results are based on 372 responses, a response rate of 25.6 percent.

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